

Interview with Mr. Menton Neggen  
Conducted by Dr. James Dodson and  
Miss Paula Boyer - April 1, 1977

**TAPE 1 - SIDE 1 & 2**

DODSON: Mr. Neggen, I wonder if you would tell us your full name and how long you've lived in the valley?

NEGGEN: My name Menton Neggen. I have lived in the valley almost continuously since November of 1911.

DODSON: Is that right. Then you're really an old timer here.

NEGGEN: Yes. I wouldn't say I'm the oldest man in the valley but I'm one of the oldest residents of the valley.

DODSON: Were you born in the valley or did you move here?

NEGGEN: You flatter me. I was born in Minnesota.

DODSON: I see.

NEGGEN: We came to Los Angeles in 1910 and then we lived in Sierra Madre for a year and then dad moved out to the valley.

DODSON: I'm interested in knowing what caused him to come to California to begin with.

NEGGEN: It was mainly on a account of my mother's health. And the doctor said that she contacted TB and the doctors at that time, all they knew that ?

BOYER: They said to California. Did they say that to a lot of people to come to California then.

NEGGEN: That seemed to be all the doctors knew. Anybody that had Tuberculous was to go dry climate. In fact of the doctors didn't even know that TB was contagious at that time.

DODSON: I think medical treatment for tuberculous has only been developed fairly recently. Until recently climate was about the only treatment.

NEGGEN: Yes, I think you're right. I don't think until about 25 years since we had any antibiotics or anything like that to counteract TB.

DODSON: And after they moved to California and finally decided or did soon decide to come to the valley. Is that right, to live here? You didn't live in the valley to begin with.

NEGGEN: No. Dad was a farmer in the mid-west and well, he came out here. It had to do whatever he could for awhile and he moved to Sierra Madre and lived there for a year and during that period of time he had heard about the valley ? per se. So he came out to take a look at it and he bought a piece of ground.

DODSON: What sort of farming did he do here after he moved into the valley?

NEGGEN: The only thing you could do at the time was dry farming. Wheat and grains. And if you didn't get a pretty good wet year you just cut hay out of it. So we didn't have anything but dry farming until your city water ?

BOYER: Where did he buy his property?

NEGGEN: When?

BOYER: Where?

NEGGEN: In Northridge. The corner of what is now Reseda Blvd. and Nordhoff Street.

DODSON: And grain, was it wheat that he raised.

NEGGEN: Well, we never did raise any grain here. It never did rain enough to get a grain crop. They used to raise grain, wheat here in the valley. I think mostly barley.

DODSON: I know the Lankershims raised wheat in the southern part of the valley.

NEGGEN: Well, I never knew that anyone ? in the valley that raised wheat.

DODSON: Is that right?

NEGGEN: I know they raised barley and oats. Later they cut it for hay.

DODSON: I see. Then since you had hay being produced, were there many...well, you would have had herds of cattle in a place like, would you? You would have had dairy cattle only.

NEGGEN: You couldn't have any dairy beef until you got water because dairy cattle you need a certain amount of alfalfa ? And without water you don't have either one. You could get about a cutting and a half of alfalfa. There just natural ? With irrigation you could get up to six cuttings a year.



DODSON: I see. Did you go to school here in the valley then after you moved here.

NEGGEN: Yes. The first grammar school in Northridge, then called Zelzah was...one with board up and down with ? and the concrete was ? and the building ? a two car garage. That was the first school we had. One year. There were possibly 17-18 kids in the whole school.

DODSON: All grades were represented then and not one room or one school.

NEGGEN: Well, I don't remember that there was eight different grades represented or not. But anything under high school was held in that one building.

DODSON: Well, did you feel that you got a pretty good education that way?

NEGGEN: Every kid thinks he does fine.

DODSON: I was wondering whether you thought there were any disadvantages as you look back on it now?

NEGGEN: Undoubtedly there were but at the time I wasn't aware of it. The few of the neighbors got together and formed a school district and then I think they voted

a bond issue of \$10,000 and up a preview ? school. With both grades in each room. You then had two teachers. 1st-4th period you had one. In 1912 you only had two teachers. I completed my grammar school education in that second building.

DODSON: Well that meant I suppose that a good part of the time you were just sitting at your desk while the other grades were reciting, is that right?

NEGGEN: Well, that's right. They called up one class at a time. You'd listen in or study or whatever you were suppose to do.

DODSON: I think nowadays it would be a little hard to keep order with that kind of an arrangement. Was that true in your day or did everybody behave himself perfectly?

NEGGEN: Do kids always behaved themselves perfectly?

DODSON: Well, I don't know. At the present time I'd say they don't. But I wondered if in your day whether they did.

NEGGEN: Well I don't think kids have changed much over the years.

DODSON: Do you recall what sort of things they use to do.  
Did they throw paper wads in your day and that sort  
of thing?

NEGGEN: If they could do so without being caught, naturally.

DODSON: I see.

BOYER: How long did they usually go to the school? Were the  
school days longer or shorter or...?

NEGGEN: The hours per day as I recall was from 9:00 to 4:00  
with an hour off for lunch. Some of the kids would  
go home for lunch. If you didn't have too far to go.  
I don't think that the term was quite as long. I  
don't believe it was over nine months at the longest.  
It starts after Labor Day and then wind up about the  
middle of June.

BOYER: Did you have very far to go to school?

NEGGEN: Fortunately I only had about two blocks. That was to  
grammar school. When I started high school in was  
over in Canoga Park and it was about six miles.

BOYER: Did you walk?

NEGGEN: Oh no, ? then afterwards a bus was arranged originally. It looped around Chatsworth around to what is now Northridge to Reseda and Sherman Oaks ? to the high school.

BOYER: How many kids were that school, the Canoga school?

NEGGEN: Let's see, the Canoga High School?

BOYER: Yes.

NEGGEN: Well, I think the first year there was about 50 in the entire high school. I think there was 17 or 18 in the freshman class and that was the greatest class.

DODSON: I wonder if any of your classmates are still around living in the valley in that group. Do you ever see any of them or hear of them?

NEGGEN: Well, I haven't seen any recently. There's one of my classmates that I went to high school with over in North Hollywood. Another one is living down in San Pedro but there's not too many students you know. At the time...that's really 50 years ago...60 years ago. A lot of them have dropped off. And they've moved away and I wouldn't know where they were now.



DODSON: I see. Can you tell us what sort of social life you had when you were in high school? What did you do to have a good time?

NEGGEN: Well, I had to come back home every day so you didn't have any social life as far as your school activities were concerned. That is we didn't ? in that case. Most of our social life was connected with the church. We got a little older and we'd go to San Fernando or Van Nuys to take in a picture show. There was this movie theater. When we got into...when I got into my teens we were five or six kids of our own age...we got interested in motorcycles so got a motorcycle gang. So then of course there's no problem to get to San Fernando or Van Nuys to see a film.

BOYER: That must have been the first motorcycle gang in the valley.

NEGGEN: Well, it might have been.

BOYER: What were motorcycles like then? I'm sure they're not like they are now at all.

NEGGEN: No, you got four cylinder bikes. The two cylinder was the top banana as far as motorcycles went.

BOYER: How were they constructed? Were they different and what about the seat?

NEGGEN: They were on the same order as today and today's motor is more efficient. They're comfortable riding. Has better seats. Better spring suspension.

DODSON: What did gasoline cost in those days? Do you remember?

NEGGEN: Well, I think it was along in some \$.20 a gallon about.

DODSON: Then there wasn't really a drastic difference between gas then and gas...oh maybe 40/50 years later. Prices have gone up in the last two years, it's true.

NEGGEN: Yeah that's right. Actually, we paid a lot more for gas then then you do now. Comparatively speaking it was...the gas hasn't increased too much in price. They just gone up considerably. And on top of that today's gasoline has your state and federal gasoline tax. I don't think there was any back then. ?

DODSON: Yes, I suppose that's true. Did you go to dances? Were they common.

NEGGEN: There was the women's clubhouse everywhere in Northridge. And we'd have a dance a couple times a month. Saturday nights. ?

DODSON: What sort of religious life did you have at that time? Were you a member of one of the churches?

NEGGEN: Yes. I was a member of the Christian Church. It was good being there, doctor.

DODSON: Well, that's rather interesting. What church was that then?

NEGGEN: It was a Lutheran Church. There was half a dozen families in the summitry ? was the church. And my dad was ? family and for awhile they'd have there services every other Sunday. There was once in our house and the next time in a neighbor's house. We were the only two houses living ? And then about 1916 we heard that more people moved in and they wanted establish a congregation and have a church. And so our dad loaned us his farm. And loaned the congregation \$3,000 to establish building fund. And he loaned it to them for three years without any interest. My dad is ?

BOYER: Is it still there today?

NEGGEN: Yeah, this was now part the what you call ?.

BOYER: Historical, cultural and monument. That is your heritage for it now.

DODSON: It's the Fourth Bible Church of Northridge, is that right?

NEGGEN: It is now. But at that time it was the Lutheran Church.

DODSON: I see. It says in the caption, built in 1918 when the community was known as Zelzah.

NEGGEN: The church was built in...it was dedicated in fact in 1917. This article is ? wasn't here at the time. He just print those.

BOYER: It's a pretty church. I don't know if it's wood, is it?

NEGGEN: It's ?

DODSON: Yes, I notice the address here. 18531 Gresham Street in Northridge.

NEGGEN: It's just about west of Reseda Blvd.



DODSON: Well, that's a real cultural monument then.

NEGGEN: Yeah. So that in a sense was our social affairs mainly. They weren't too many things around and that was one place to meet.

DODSON: Did the church sponsor social affairs then at one time or another?

NEGGEN: Oh yeah. They had their young people's group. Meeting every two weeks and we'd have parties and social affairs.

DODSON: This church is actually still in use then at the present time. It is used for services.

NEGGEN: Yes, it is.

DODSON: I see.

NEGGEN: It became too small for the congregation so they bought a larger piece of ground and built another building. At the present time the church done on Roscoe, about a block east of Reseda Blvd. across from Northridge Hospital.

DODSON: What sort of vocational aims did you have when you were in school? What did you plan to do?

NEGGEN: I had no plans except go to school that's all. I had to be in high school so I was and I took the courses that they required. They required a certain amount of English and a certain amount of math and ? civics. Today I suppose it would be...

DODSON: Political Science.

NEGGEN: I guess that's what you call it. And I took a couple years of Spanish. ? I had a vacant period and so I elected to take typing. I had no reason in the world to think that I would ever use an electric typewriter but I had an open period so I ? to type.

DODSON: Well, actually I think that's a very valuable skill. I took typing myself when I was in Junior High School and I still remember the keyboard. I don't have much speed any more.

NEGGEN: Well, it's come in handy for me many and many of times. But I didn't have any particular reason for taking it up half the time except that I had a vacant period.

DODSON: I see. Well maybe that was one of the most valuable ways to spend that period. Of course, I'm lucky then that Paula here is expert on the typewriter so I can always let her do the work.

BOYER: Right.

DODSON: Do you remember the coming of World War I in the valley? Or was that too early for you to have any recollection of?

NEGGEN: No, I was only in grammar school at that time. World War I was, it started in 1914.

DODSON: Yes, our part of it didn't start till 1917.

NEGGEN: '17, yeah. I think that's the year I started high school. So I knew I was too young to be drafted in a thing like that.

DODSON: I just wondered if you had any recollections of anything relating to it here in the valley? You might have some fragmentary recollections of some incident or something of the kind.

NEGGEN: No, I wasn't directly connected with any war activity at that time. About all I knew was in the paper.

DODSON: Now I imagine World War II you have a much more vivid memory of.

NEGGEN: Indeed, yes.

DODSON: You weren't in the Armed Forces yourself in World War II were you?

NEGGEN: No. I was a member of the Los Angeles Police Department. I was working in the Hollywood Division and I was assigned to war activities. As an instructor for instruction. There was volunteers in what they call ? police work. You'd be honored to at least preserve ? assistance and I worked in the War Activities Office for six years. It got wind down some of the various services that ?

DODSON: Did the war make any change in police work whether there was more or less crime or was it just about the same as in peace time?

NEGGEN: Well now I can only speak really from my experiences in the Hollywood Division. And it made a lot of difference because when I first went on the Police Department I started in Hollywood Division. At that time they had about 140 patrolmen on the beat. And in '43...



(FIXING TAPE HERE FOR BETTER QUALITY)

The day after the war broke out, the day after Pearl Harbor some of the fellows who were in the military reserve immediately called back to active duty. A lot of the fellows who had enough time in to retire, retired and went to work in ship yards and aircraft plants. Because they could make about twice as much there as they could on the police department. And then there were some of the fellows who, although they were not drafted, they went into the military service. Both the army and navy wanted men and a fellow that had had previous service with a rank of any kind, he could go right back in with a one step at least raise and rank with what he was discharged on. So a lot of fellows did that. And I was going to try to get try to get into the service but I thought that with my experience I should try for either Navy Intelligence or Army Intelligence. But without any previous military service...well, they told me that they were taking their officers from men already in the service and the rest of the personnel with men under 26. Well, I was past that age and so they didn't...they wouldn't consider me. But both the Navy and the Army urged me to accept indoctrination in the MP's or Shore Patrol. And I thought if I'm going to keep on doing police work I can do it right where I'm at. Because the salary

wasn't much at that time. I think a First Class Seamen or a PFC was drawing about \$50 a month salary. I had a wife and two kids to support and I had built myself a new home and the payments on that was \$41 a month and I didn't think that they could live on \$9 a month.

DODSON: I can understand that.

NEGGEN: So I thought, well, later on I'm going to try anyway. And somehow or another the Captain find out that I was thinking of going into the military police. And so he called me when I came back and he talked like a Dutch uncle and talked me out of going into the service. He says, "I'm an ex-Navy man and I know what it's like," and he says, "You're worth a lot right here where you're at than you would be in the service." So a couple days later the Deputy Chief in charge of personnel called me in and he gave me the same kind of a pitch. He says, "I'm an ex-Army man and I know it would be a lot of wasted time in the military service." And he says, "You're doing more good where you're at." You see I was instructing these fellows and I was the Assistant Coordinator. And so I stayed where I was at. I did my war service at home.

DODSON: Was police work more demanding during the war than normally?

NEGGEN: Particularly yes, in Hollywood Division. I mentioned awhile ago that when I first went to work on the department in Hollywood there were about 140 patrolmen ? Some 14-15 years later we had...we were down to 59 and they couldn't get men to go on the department that were qualified because any man who was physically and mentally qualified to get on the police department was already in the service. So that is one reason for these auxiliary and later on what they called the Police Reserve Corp. They did a tremendous job in doing actual police work in the division. Without their assistance we'd a been in a say way because about half the personnel that we had 15 years previous...the city had grown some of that length of time and it was possibly five to eight times as much traffic normally because as there had been previously and on top of that it seemed like about 75% of every serviceman who came within 100 miles of L.A. wanted to go to Hollywood on leave. They wanted to see the If Cafe and they wanted to see the Brown Derby and they wanted to Grauman's Chinese Theater and the Hollywood Bowl and most them did. We'd have an average of 10,000 servicemen on leave possibly each weekend. With all the additional work



and half the personnel. So there was a lot more particularly in Hollywood because it happened to be Hollywood.

DODSON: Were those servicemen pretty well behaved or were they apt to get into trouble when they were here on leave?

NEGGEN: Oh, most of them were pretty well behaved but then you take any group of young men and if they're shipped out after basic training and they're going out to the South Pacific. The army men would go out through Port MacArthur and down to Pedro. And a lot of men then was a ship out of Long Beach. Air Force group was over at March Air Force Base in Riverside and you take a young man that's going to be shipped overseas and he doesn't know whether he'll ever come back or not so he's apt to raise his heels a little bit you know and a lot of them did. The army had military police with their posts at the Hollywood Station and the navy had shore patrol detail at the Hollywood Station and so we'd pick up sailors and marines or soldiers or air corp men, out of line, we didn't lock them up on a civilian charge, we'd just bring them in and turn them over to the military authorities and let them handle it. The less work for us and it'd be better for the serviceman.



Because it doesn't do a serviceman a bit of good to be locked up on a civilian charge when he's on leave. We weren't about ?frisking them, just tried to keep them out of any further trouble.

DODSON: We read a lot about the massage parlors and that sort of thing in Hollywood now. Was there any increase in prostitution and that sort of problem during the war as a result of all these men on leave?

NEGGEN: Well, I presume there was. Wherever you find a lot of single men you're going to find a certain group of women that's going to follow them around. Of course, I had nothing to do with that at that time so on personal experience, I can't say that I know if there was any more or less. I imagine there were.

DODSON: We have heard of course about the relocation of the Japanese. Do you have any opinion on that? What was the feeling of the police toward the Japanese citizens at the time, or persons of Japanese descent? They were American citizens possibly.

NEGGEN: Well, there was a certain amount of emotional feeling of course. But most of it I suppose was magnified in the newspapers. And you read about it and so if you read about one thing or the whole lot you're going to

pay more attention than you would otherwise. But there weren't any Japanese living around there because they had all been moved to some, what you call it, a concentration camp or a detention camp. So we didn't have any Japanese to speak of, not around Hollywood anyhow.

DODSON: Well, I was referring particularly to the time when they were rounded up. Did you have anything to do with that since you were on the Police Department? In the sending them to the camps?

NEGGEN: No, I didn't. The military took care of that.

DODSON: I see.

NEGGEN: They started on it immediately.

DODSON: Now you were going to tell us about your neighbor.

NEGGEN: Yes, he told me that I think on December 8 in the evening somebody rang the bell and "Your name is so-and-so," and the guy said, "Yes, sir." The man had a notice and he says, "You will report such and such a place down in Los Angeles at 8:00 in the morning." He says, "Yes, sir." And he had a notice from the Naval Headquarters to go down to L.A. and report. So

he says "The next morning I went down and they asked me a few questions and then they sent me to see a doctor. And I went to see the doctor and he says I could walk and I was warm and I was immediately back on active duty." And he says they assigned me to help pick up aiding Japanese that we might find. Now the Army did the same thing. I suppose the FBI did too to a certain extent. The FBI were active all of the time of course, you know, trying to pick up spies. The Japanese was easy to pick up because of his appearance. Now the German spies of course were by far the best to organize and the most difficult to apprehend. The Italians didn't seem to cause much trouble. Maybe they weren't too interested or they didn't have the background.

DODSON: I don't think they were too enthusiastic about being in the war one way or the other. I think they got out as soon as soon they could. Of course we hear sometimes about that presumed air raid over Los Angeles. Do you remember that?

NEGGEN: Yes. Yes, I do. And I've heard on good authority that one of these miniature Japanese submarines was...well either grounded or apprehended down there near Redondo Beach. Later on I found that there were about a half a dozen of these little subs that were



sunk in the Santa Barbara Channel. So they were there, it wasn't publicized.

DODSON: No, I hadn't heard that myself. I had heard about this story of the one airplane that flew over Los Angeles and created quite a stir but apparently it wasn't Japanese.

NEGGEN: I don't know. But I had read later that there was really a plane over here, an unidentified plane one night. It may have been a Japanese plane and it might not be. Because of my job in the War Activities Office I, along with coordinators from other divisions, were privy to information that was top secret at that time. And I have a good reason to believe that these u-boats that were sunk near Santa Barbara, that this actually happened and there was a u-boat that ? that some oil tanks that was the leader, you know.

DODSON: Yes, I heard about that.

BOYER: Did you find...I think there was one kept down in L.A. Harbor or something. They finally sunk that submarine too. So I believe that's the one that's in Los Angeles Harbor but I'm not positive because it was sunk somewhere else.



NEGGEN: It was Japanese sub fired at some oil tanks up in Goleta, that's the other side of Santa Barbara. I don't know if there were...did any firing or anything in the harbor or Long Beach or not. I haven't heard that they did.

DODSON: So we actually had no real war activity in this particular area. No subs fired on anything in Los Angeles County along our coastline.

NEGGEN: No, but we never knew when it was going to happen. We were always afraid that it might happen at any time. So we had to be ready for them.

DODSON: Did the blackouts result in many traffic accidents? Do you recall? Was that problem?

NEGGEN: Not particularly. There was a gasoline rationing and there was a dim out and people...you couldn't drive for awhile unless you had headlight, as sort of a mask. Then you had another permit for that cause that didn't last too long but then the gas rationing did. I know I was restricted to 40 gallons a month of gasoline.

DODSON: Of course at that time you had the Pacific Electric Cars that you could ride on so I suppose it wasn't too much of a hardship really, was it?

NEGGEN: Well, it would depend on what you were doing and the hours you worked. Now, for instance, I lived in the North Hollywood at the time and I knew when I'd go to work but I never knew when I'd get off. And the last car would leave Hollywood about 12:30 at night and it was seldom that I'd be off until 1:00 and sometimes 4:00 and so I couldn't depend on the streetcar, I'd have to thumb a ride.

DODSON: Nowadays that would be a little dangerous at that time of the night. Was it a danger then or did you feel uneasy about doing that?

NEGGEN: I didn't because I was in uniform. I never gave it a thought but I do know one of my friends who worked in the Detective Bureau and he picked up three servicemen one night on his way home and they took his car and pushed him out of the car and went on their merry way. His car was picked up later. I think up around Hueneme or someplace. There was a naval base up there. A lot of fellows would go to town on leave you know and the first thing you know they'd be broke and maybe they'd up to be...there

were suppose to report in the morning at say 7:00 or something like that and they wouldn't leave Hollywood 1:00 or 2:00 and they'd just thumb a ride. Most anybody would pick up a serviceman. So this man he picked up three boys and they took his car. Well, I use to pick them up frequently but I was in uniform so I was never worried about it.

DODSON: Do you think there has been an increase in crime in general since that time? Do we have a greater criminal element in the city now then we did during the war or when you were on the police force in Los Angeles?

NEGGEN: Yes, I think we do. And I think one the reasons is drugs. And the marijuana. I know a lot of people say that that's just a mild weed and so on but there's a lot of kick in marijuana and a fellow mixes marijuana and alcohol and he don't know what you're going to get. It may not affect two different people the same way.

DODSON: Would you say that the streets in the valley are less safe now then they were at that time then, not to mention Hollywood itself.

NEGGEN: Well, I imagine the streets were safer then because there was only about 1/20th as much traffic on the streets as there are now.

DODSON: Do you have other recollections of the war period that you might tell us about? Anything we haven't asked about that you remember?

NEGGEN: Undoubtedly there were a lot of things but I'd have to give it a little thought or you'd have to ask a leading question and it might recall something as a lot of people say it must be exciting to be a police officer, so many things happen. But after so long a time, why it's just part of a job and you don't think it's unusual. So what might seem real exciting to you for instance, would be just a normal day's work and I wouldn't think a thing about it.

DODSON: Paula, do you think of anything that's exciting to you you'd like to ask about?

BOYER: Well, one thing I was just wondering...what happened at the end of World War II? Was there any kind of celebration?

NEGGEN: At the end of World War II, oh yeah. The streets were full of people. They were happy and yelling and



girls were kissing guys they'd never seen before.  
They'd hit the bars and get half tight and hilarious,  
you know. Everybody had a good time.

DODSON: When did you leave the police force?

NEGGEN: In 1963.

DODSON: I see.

NEGGEN: I put in over 35 years and I thought it was time to  
quit.

BOYER: A long time.

DODSON: Do you remember some of the earthquakes that had hit  
the valley and what your reaction was to them?

NEGGEN: Yes, I remember we had a quake I think around '16 or  
'17 and it didn't do any damage to speak of here in  
the valley. It hit down in Redondo I think, down in  
that neighborhood in Torrance. Then was it '32 or  
'33 when they had a big shake down in Long Beach.

DODSON: I think that was '33 wasn't it?

NEGGEN: I believe it was along in there, yeah. That was quite a shake. Though we would have a shake every once in awhile. But you kind of get use to them.

DODSON: Well, how about the one in '71? That was a little different in this area, wasn't it? Did you feel that pretty strongly, the Sylmar Quake.

NEGGEN: Yes I did. That's the roughest quake I've ever experienced. It was happened just before 6:00 in the morning and it woke me up.

DODSON: Was your house damaged in any way?

NEGGEN: No, the house wasn't damaged. I had a couple of cracks in the block wall but they were small cracks. We were fortunate in that respect. It did knock some dishes off of the nick-knack shelves you know but there was no structural damage to our home.

DODSON: Now I imagine you read about the Palmdale Bulge. Does that bother you, the prospect of a major quake in the future?

NEGGEN: It doesn't really bother me because what's going to happen is going to happen. We don't live near that fault. We never know when a quake is going to hit.

When the quake hit here like it did in Sylmar, when was it...in 1971. Until that time, people didn't know there was a fault up there, did they? So, we might be sitting on top of a fault and don't know it.

DODSON: So you can sort of take earthquakes in stride? You're not really concerned about them?

NEGGEN: No, there's nothing you can do about it. If you were scared and apprehensive all the time it would just...you know there is no problem now is there.

DODSON: Now some people have told me that the real problem in the valley in the past was not earthquakes at all, but floods. Do you remember any of the flooding in the valley?

NEGGEN: Yes. Every time we'd have a wet year there'd be a lot of floods. I remember seeing a picture that was taken I think about 1910 in Van Nuys. Well, it had about 4 feet of water at the intersection of Sylvan and Van Nuys Blvd. I saw a picture taken in Reseda several years later where it looked like about 2 feet of water on the corner of Sherman Way and Reseda Blvd. At that time there was only one building on the corner and that was a general merchandise store on the northwest corner of the intersection and the

picture was taken from the other side of the street. And it looked like this building was sitting on a float in the middle of a lake and there was seagulls swimming around. I've seen Saticoy...I've seen Reseda Blvd. under water from Saticoy to Victory. But after the County Flood Control projects, the various storm drains. The flooding has pretty well stopped now. Pacoima wash use to get things pretty wet. The drains down there, it would rain down there...it would rain down Tyrone, Tyrone Street was actually a natural water course. Pacomia wash would drain off into that mesh and would leave Van Nuys so wet.

DODSON: Did you have any problems here in Northridge?

NEGGEN: No, Northridge was high enough to where the water would drain away. But it would be pretty wet down in Reseda and along Sherman Way but Northridge and Chatsworth and the valley east until you get to about, close to San Fernando or where Arleta is now, there would be no particular flooding from them. In 1938 there was a real, a real bad flood in the valley. And right after that is when they built the Hansen Dam and that stopped a lot flood water in it. But in '38 there was only one bridge in the valley that's left standing and that was the one on Chandler



down in North Hollywood. That's the only one didn't go out.

DODSON: Do you recall the Depression of 1929 and how that affected your family? Or did it affect it?

NEGGEN: Well, it did in this respect. Our farm that we had over there at Northridge. My oldest brother was working that on ? I had another older brother who was on the Police Department and a younger brother who was going to high school but when the depression hit for about five years, we couldn't...we didn't farm the place. It wasn't worthwhile farming.

DODSON: Is that right? The value of the crops would pay to gather them?

NEGGEN: Well, the biggest cost of course was working the ground and irrigating. And if you couldn't get back to work there was use of working, plus the water bill. So for about five years we didn't work the ground. And my brother who was on the Police Department and myself were the only two that had a steady job and income and so we paid the taxes and so on otherwise we would have lost the place. So in that respect the depression was kind of rough. Otherwise and the fact, I feel that I was very

fortunate, my mother too, in that we had a steady job at the time. Because there was a lot of fellows who were really hard up. I'd men, college graduates, go to work for starting and sell and you and him would be happy to get a job for \$90 a month, work in a gas station. Imagine that. A lot of people would feel insulted if you offered them a starting salary of \$90 a week till they learned how to do something.

DODSON: Well, I did a little better than that. After I got a couple of college degrees I got a job at a \$100 a month.

NEGGEN: It depends on what year was this?

DODSON: Well, that was later. I got my first job I think about 1939. We were supposedly pulling out of the depression by then but I still was doing very well as you could see.

NEGGEN: You started teaching at that time, did you?

DODSON: Yes, I had two college degrees. Got my first teaching job at \$100 a month.

NEGGEN: Well, I don't know. I've heard stories about the teachers being under paid and all that. I always

believe them. And then during the war when I was assigned to instruct these volunteer police officers, I had five classes a night at the Hollywood High School. And my salary, it figured out about \$.94/hr. at the time and then I noticed a young fellow who'd come in just about 10 minutes before we have a break you know and he'd pick up the attendance slips and I collared him in the hallway and I says who he was. I wanted to know who he was. I knew he wasn't one of our students. When it turned out he was an accredited instructor for the Board of Education. Now I learned later that the Board of Education wouldn't employ or permit anyone to teach in the High School or just any public school unless he or she had a certificate as an accredited instructor. Well, I didn't have any such certificate but I was assigned to teach at the Hollywood High School and the reason was that the Board of Education didn't have any accredited instructor who was qualified to teach this course. So to get around it they did sign an accredited instructor there to pick up the attendance slips and he spent about 10 or 15 minutes per night and it was a two hour session each night. Now if he can get paid and so I was told \$2.38 an hour for my time. It took him about 10 minutes to get it.



DODSON: Well, during the war I had a job where I was teaching some Air Corp squadrons at Texas A&M. For the nine month period I drew \$2,250 and I got an extra bonus of \$250 for nine months because of the high cost of living. So I got \$2,500 for a nine month term. You can see that I was a war profiteer. Sometimes I think that people don't realize how high salaries are now in comparison with the way they use to be. When I came to California I discovered that many of my students hoped to begin at salaries higher than I'd ever made in my life. What would you regard as the greatest change in the valley since you have lived here?

NEGGEN: Oh by all means, bringing in the water. That is what started to make a change in the valley. Before that it was just dry farming and after 1915 when the water came in well then you could turn to be a market faster. So if we hadn't had got the water this would still be a some wide desert.

DODSON: I suppose it was the water that enabled the great increase in population.

NEGGEN: Oh yes. But the big increase didn't come until after the war was over, long about '46/'47. That's when people started to move in. Up until the beginning of



World War II this was just, you might say, mostly one big farm. A lot of small chicken ranches and a lot people had a half acre, an acre you know that they'd live on and save on the farming. But the west end of the valley particularly was mostly pretty good size farms. Up until...after World War II I don't think the savings and loan association would even make a loan on a house in the west end of the valley.

DODSON: Is that right?

NEGGEN: You'd go about as far as Sepulveda Blvd. and if you lived west of that why you were out of luck getting much from them. Too far out. It doesn't hardly seem possible...

DODSON: No, it certainly doesn't.

NEGGEN: ...at the present time.

DODSON: Do you think there have been many changes in the type of houses built in the valley that you can remember? Changes in architecture in styles?

NEGGEN: Yes, there has been. When I was a young fellow, I started in...after I left the farm I started following construction work and I was finally

roofing. And I worked on a lot of houses and they were mostly what you call California bungalow type. And a lot of those old houses that we had, had two electrical circuits in them. And if a house had four circuits in it, that was a pretty good sized house. And today you don't hardly find a house...you don't hardly build a house today with less than about 10 or 12 circuits in them.

DODSON: What do you mean by circuits? I'm not an authority on electricity.

NEGGEN: Well, you were allowed so many watts on one circuit. You can't have more than so many outlets on one electrical circuit. But it doesn't leave proliferation of the electrical gadgets of all kinds. Take an electric range, an oven, your heaters, your garbage disposal and all of this, you've got to have more circuits or otherwise you're going to burn out something. And now they went through this early Spanish California bungalow type than early Spanish and now the...an awful lot of ranch type homes, you know.

DODSON: And I imagine there's been a terrific change in the price of homes within your lifetime.

NEGGEN: Indeed yes. A fellow use to be able to build a model...a modest say 2 bedroom, 1 bath house for about \$1,800/\$2,000/\$2,200. It might have 900,000 square feet and today it is going to cost in the neighborhood of \$30 a square foot.

DODSON: And I see in the paper that one economist predicts that's going to go considerably higher. That the price of homes is going to continue to go up.

NEGGEN: Well, they probably will. Everything else is going up. Wages keep going up. And so the people who make building materials, if you pay more money, you're going to have to charge more for your materials. Everything is going up.

DODSON: What do you think about changes in fashions as you've seen them?

NEGGEN: I'm hardly an authority on that.

DODSON: Does it seem to you sometimes as though we are a little more sloppy or shall we say informal in the way we dress than when you were high school say?

NEGGEN: Oh, I imagine they are a little more casual in their dress. That's a very tactful way of putting it.

DODSON: What do you think about the morality? Do you think there's been much of a change there with the passage of time?

NEGGEN: Well, probably so...I mean there are a lot of things that are considered common today. People use words that people wouldn't only speak privately when I was a kid.

DODSON: Yes, I am inclined to agree with that. I'm sometimes surprised at some of the vocabulary I come in contact with.

NEGGEN: Well, you take a lot of the books that are printed today. Take some of the moving picture shows you see. Even on TV. They use language and they show scenes that wouldn't have been allowed even 15 years ago. I guess they call a lot of the X rated movies.

DODSON: X-rated, yes.

NEGGEN: I've never seen one of them yet so I don't know.

DODSON: Well, we might ask Paula whether she's ever seen one. What she thinks about them?

BOYER: I'm not being interviewed here. ?



DODSON: I guess we got a noncommittal answer on that one. I thought maybe she'd give us an expert's opinion. Do you think that this indicates a freer type of life or a deterioration in our standards?

NEGGEN: Well, actually I think it's a deterioration. I think it's a laxness or morals. I mean I almost thought it was blue nose ? There's a limit to everything.

DODSON: One of the situations in which we find ourselves now in the city is that we are approaching some elections. I wonder how you feel about...

TAPE 2 - SIDE 1 & 2

NEGGEN: You were talking about the valley seceding from the city.

DODSON: Yes, yes. We're interested in knowing how you feel about that.

NEGGEN: Well, there'd be a lot of problems to do so. One would be water and the other would be sewage disposal. And they would take a lot of figuring wouldn't it? I do feel that perhaps the people in the valley are paying more taxes in proportion to the services they receive than the other side of the hill. But it would pretty difficult to arrange water and sewage disposal wouldn't it? Take the sewage...you've got to run on around the end of Elysian Park and it goes down to I think and dumps in the ocean somewhere in Redondo or there in El Segundo, I guess it is. So if the valley were to secede they would have to lease rights. And then the water situation, it's just the other way around. First it comes in here of San Fernando reservoir and if the valley were to secede then the rest of the city, you'd have to lease rights to the water pipes.

DODSON: I don't know how the situation is now but I think when the water was first brought in, there was a requirement that you had to be a part of the city in order to share in that water. So I'm not sure now what the water situation would be if the valley seceded.

NEGGEN: Well, that's another problem. If the valley tried to secede maybe the fellows up there in Owens Valley wouldn't rejuvenate this law and then the valley would be out of water completely.

DODSON: Someone has suggested too that another big problem would arise from the valley having to buy out the city property in the valley, that that would cause an enormous expense.

NEGGEN: Well, that's true. On the other hand, haven't the taxpayers for the last 50 years or better been paying taxes to city property that is already in the other part of the city.

DODSON: Yeah, it would seem that that would be the case. That after all they've contributed to the building of all these things when it came right down to it.

NEGGEN: I imagine that's the end just about life out there. Maybe.

DODSON: I take it you haven't quite made up your mind then whether you would or wouldn't favor that particular thing.

NEGGEN: No I haven't as yet. And I haven't seen anyone come up with a reasonable solution to the problem or how they should try to divide and figure out what this is worth and that's worth and how the services could be provided. I think we just need better representation here in the valley, maybe more. I guess our councilmen are doing alright. I don't mean that we should have, just jumping overboard, but maybe we need some smaller districts. Then we'd have more representation.

DODSON: Now of course the other big issue that we hear about all the time, is that of busing. How do you stand on the busing of children?

NEGGEN: ? opposed to it. I think it's ridiculous to spend...the articles in the paper say that it's cost about \$30,000,000 or something like that. What good does it do to take a kid far away from his home and ride him in the bus for an hour a day or a hour and a



half, something like that, just to get to another school. That isn't going to make them any smarter. It doesn't help their parents any. They don't know where the kids are at or when they're going to get back home. And it's another thing for sure that the more miles you drive, the more accidents you're going to be involved in. I think it's absolutely stupid to go and bus kids 10/15/30 miles away. Why? Because they want to mix them up with somebody with a different color. If you move into a neighborhood and your kids go to school there because it's convenience, that's what you want. And if there's some colored people or Mexicans or Asiatic that move into the next block, you're kids will go to school with them and there's no problem. You just spend a lot of money and haul the kids miles and miles to look for more trouble, that's all and paying for it too. Now how in the world can smart people think that's going to solve anything?

DODSON: Well, the judges seem determine to force it on everyone regardless of whether it's wise or unwise.

NEGGEN: Well, my opinion of those judges is not much.

DODSON: I think you have expressed an opinion much like we've gotten from everyone else we've interviewed on that.

Do you think of any other political problem that you think is very important to the valley?

NEGGEN: Right off hand I can't say what particular... Do you have anything in mind?

DODSON: No, those were the two things I had especially in mind and I wondered if you had any other.

NEGGEN: Well, I might be able to think of something after you leave.

DODSON: I see. Is there anything in the history of the valley that you feel is especially good that brought you a lot of satisfaction if you think about it?

NEGGEN: Well, it's like a man says, "If you could go back to any age you wanted to," he says, "What age would you prefer to be?" I said, "Oh, I think 28." And he says, "That's because you had more fun at that time than you have before or since." So if I was say that any particular time in the valley it would probably coincide with my particular age and what I was doing at that time.

DODSON: I see. So it would depend rather on your particular age at the time rather than looking back on any particular event?

NEGGEN: Well something is always happening is very interesting at the time and you don't think about it after awhile. So for me to say any one thing, maybe in a couple of hours I'd think of something else that would just be equally interesting at the time.

BOYER: Do you think that the valley ever made any mistakes, politically or in any other way that was detrimental to the valley?

NEGGEN: Let's see...could you rephrase that?

BOYER: Oh boy, this will be hard. I was just wondering if there is anything that the valley ever did as a whole that was maybe detrimental to its future or its growth or something.

NEGGEN: Well, how could you designate the valley doing anything like this. After all we have a central city government and the people in the valley have to live according to rules and regulations like everybody else in the city. So you can't pin it down to a group I don't think.

DODSON: Do you ever look back to the time when the valley had so many open fields and wish it was like that again rather than built up as it is now?

NEGGEN: Yes, whenever I want to get someplace in a hurry and I can't because traffic stops me. Of course, the smog situation. We didn't use to have any smog here until World War II. Because there was, you might say, wide open spaces. Lockheed started when? About 1930, early '30s.

DODSON: I'm not sure.

NEGGEN: I think it was...I knew a fellow that was one of the first employees to Lockheed and he said they started in a building about the size a Nobel garage over in Burbank. And still by '38 it was a big organization. It started to make planes for England and by World War II we had I don't know how many factories are here. And that's when we started to get smog. Then of course the increase in automobiles too. I think automobiles generate more smog than factories do. But we have, what over a million people in the valley. And I imagine there are in the neighborhood of 350,000 automobiles and trucks and motorcycles in the valley. And up until 1950 we didn't have 100,000 people in the valley I don't think.



DODSON: Has there ever been any minority problems in the valley to your knowledge? We hear so much about minority tensions throughout the country at the present time. Has that ever been a problem here with any of the ethnic groups in the valley?

NEGGEN: Not particularly. About the only ethnic group that we had out here at that time was Mexicans. They were here mainly as laborers. A lot came up from Mexico and they couldn't talk English, they were poor classes and so they were poorly educated and there wasn't any particular problem except that were kind of light fendered. I can understand why they would be. I mean they were deprived of a lot of things that they'd like to have and here they were loose and they'd help themselves, some of them. There wasn't any particular battling between the Caucasians and the Mexican group but there was considerable petty theft on their point. Most of their battling was really between themselves. In the early history of the valley, here it is along in the '20s and '30s, they was these camps. There might be 100 or 150 that live in the camp and they'd work in the fields, you know the farm work. They'd go back to their camp at night but on Saturday nights they'd full of moonshine and play the guitar and first thing you know there'd be a fight. But that was between themselves.

DODSON: There wasn't any other minority of any size in the valley then other than the Mexican-American group?

NEGGEN: No, there wasn't. For years there were no colored people lived in either Van Nuys or North Hollywood. They were just a few over in Pacoima. They were...most of the people in Pacoima were Mexicans. There was, oh for awhile there were a few Hindus, but not many. And they only stayed five or six years then they left.

DODSON: Was there many Japanese or Chinese-Americans in the valley?

NEGGEN: No. No, a very few in fact. There was one man, a Chinaman up here that had a pretty good size farm and there were a few Japanese who would lease a piece of ground. They'd be doing truck gardening. But they'd lease a piece of ground for about three years and then they'd move on. But they always kept to themselves. And there never were very many of them at any one time either.

DODSON: Did you know personally any of the early pioneers in the valley or their descendants? People like the Lankershims for instances. Any of the members of

that family or the Van Nuys family or the Porters or MacClays, any of those people.

NEGGEN: I didn't know any of them. I just heard about them or read about them later on. After all, I was just a kid when they first came in. By the time I got old enough to get around and get acquainted why they were gone, you know. Mulholland had a ranch over here in Northridge, half way between Northridge and Chatsworth. He had about 400 acres of citrus in there. So his son, Perry Mulholland lived on the ranch and I think he was the manager of it for several years but I haven't seen him for four years so I don't think he's living any longer.

DODSON: No, I'm sure he isn't. We interviewed his widow a few years ago. Rather a few weeks ago.

BOYER: I think he just recently died. Maybe in a year or something. I could be wrong. But I know he's dead.

NEGGEN: I heard that he was gone. His son I think is around or his nephew or something.

DODSON: We did interview the nephew of the original engineer William Mulholland. The nephew's name is William but

he's not the son of Perry. I think he's the son of...

BOYER: He's the son of somebody named...?

NEGGEN: But is he a fellow about 6'4" or so?

BOYER: He's small. But he's a much older gentleman. He's William Mulholland's brother.

DODSON: Yes, that's right.

BOYER: Mr. William Mulholland is his uncle.

DODSON: Yes, that's right.

NEGGEN: You've already talked to the Weddington's I presume?

DODSON: No, we haven't up till the present time. The Weddington's have been interviewed so many times that they are a little reluctant to be interviewed.

NEGGEN: Weddington, is he still living?

DODSON: I'm not sure whether he is or not. Is he the one owned the store at one time in North Hollywood?



NEGGEN: Well, there were two. I know there was Fred and Guy and I think their father had a store. Maybe Fred did too as a young man. Then he got into real estate later on and he had several business buildings there on Lankershim Blvd. Then he was President of an independent bank there for quite awhile. It was later bought out I believe by the Security Pacific Bank.

DODSON: Incidentally, since we're speaking of North Hollywood, I remember you telling about the station over there at what was then called Lankershim. Some man named Pope who was quite a character and lived to be over 100 years old and still kept a job for awhile.

NEGGEN: Yeah.

DODSON: What sort of a person was he?

NEGGEN: Well, he was an old westerner. I understood he had quite a colorful career as a prospector and mule skinner and so on. But in the time that I knew him he was very quiet. He didn't want to talk to people. Unless he had known them for some time, he wouldn't hardly talk to you at all. I was walking the beat there one night in North Hollywood and here was a

vacant store building and here I saw the doors open. I stepped inside and there was a man on the stage and he was selling some health foods and he had the, made out of plastic or something, some figure of a man. And internal organs made of different, like heart and lungs and so on. All colored so you'd recognize it and he was describing the functions of the various organs of the body and he says, "As a young man," he says, "I got sick. And I doctored with several specialists, until each one of them in turn gave me up. And one of them says I should go out west. And I've grown up in a little town in Arizona," then he says, "I was sitting on a bench out by this beef bowl one day and feeling sorry for myself and an elderly man," and he says, "He must have been 85 years old at least at the time." And he described this old man Pope, you see. He pulled a beard or something about like so and always wore a big broad rimmed western hat," and he says, "But somehow you feel 'em." He says, "I told him I'm feeling lousy." He says, "What did the doctors tell you?" He said, "The doctors tell me that I only got about six months to live." And he says, "I'm giving up doctors." And so he says, "This old man says, well if you've decided to give up the doctors, would you take an old man's advice?" And he says, "I'd try anything." So he says, "This old man tells me. Get yourself a burro,

a blanket roll, some cooking utensils. Go on out in the desert and start prospecting and when the burro stops why you stop and make camp for the night." He says, "Sleep on the ground, get right close to mother nature. Live a natural life." And he says, "I did and in six months I was in good health." He says, "I've never seen that fellow since and that must have been at least 15 years ago." But he says, "I took that old man's advice and I regained my health. I started to live a natural life and live on natural foods." And while he was talking he happened to glance up and he saw old man Pope. He had come down the sidewalk and just stepped inside the door. And I was standing about 10 feet away from him and he says, "There he is now." And I know it wasn't a put on deal because it too natural and realistic, you know. And old man Pope he just scooted out the door and up the sidewalk. He didn't want to talk to anybody about it.

DODSON: Well, was he the station agent at the Lankershim Station.

NEGGEN: Oh no. He was the night watchman at the California State Department of...the State Highway Maintenance Department. They had a yard over there in North Hollywood where they stored a lot of their equipment



you know. And Dan Pope was their night watchman. So later on I was assigned to work down in L.A. several years later and I looked up the street and on the other side of the street was old man Pope. Coming down the sidewalk and he had crutch under one arm and a cane in the other hand. And I hadn't seen him for several years. About three or four days later I saw him again. So that time I crossed over and I started talking to him. I said, "I haven't seen you for quite awhile." And he looked at me and I said, "I don't suppose you remember me but I use to work in North Hollywood." "Oh yes," he says, "Now I remember you." He spoke very slowly and deliberately. So I says, "What happened? I see you walking with a crutch and a cane." And he says, "Well, I got hit by a car. It threw me 27 feet through the air and I never broke a bone." I says, "How long ago was that?" He says, "About three years ago." And I said, "Well, if you never broke a bone if it happened three years ago, how come you're still walking with a crutch and a cane?" "Well," he says, "I'll tell you. When you get as old as I am you don't snap back as quickly as you use to. If I'd been 15, even 10 years younger I'd have been as sound as a dollar long before now." Well that gave me an opening. I said, "Dan, how old are you anyway?" He says, "My boy, I don't tell my age any more. If I were to tell you



how old I am, I wouldn't be up to where I couldn't brush them off with a stick." He never did tell me how old he was. About two or three years later he had been crossing the street up at 1st and Main and he got half way across and the signals changed so he was going to stand there between the two tracks, you know. And cars going this way and both ways and either he lost his balance or something and he fell underneath the street car and pretty near cut him in two. They had to get an erector to lift the street car off its rails to get his body off of it. And an article in the paper said he was either 111 or 113.

DODSON: Is that right?

NEGGEN: Yep, they weren't sure.

DODSON: Well, did he remain a watchman up to the time of his death?

NEGGEN: No, I heard that he finally retired at the age of 107.

DODSON: Well, that seems to show the valley is a rather healthful place to live judging by his cohere anyway.

NEGGEN: I don't know where he got his ground work. It must have been a good one.

BOYER: You told us about the church here in Northridge, do you know of any other places that would be considered an historical site that we might not know of? They, of course, like the adobes, etc. that we already know about.

NEGGEN: Well, about the house that my dad built in 1912.

BOYER: Oh, where's that?

NEGGEN: It's right over there on Reseda Blvd. and in fact it's the only house left of the original constructors north of the railroad tracks.

BOYER: It's on Reseda? Is it near the corner of...

NEGGEN: About a block south of Nordhoff on the west...

DODSON: What would the street address be?

NEGGEN: 9003 Reseda Blvd.

DODSON: And that was finished in 1912.

NEGGEN: Yeah, we moved into in 1912. At the time there was probably only 8 or 9 houses in the whole town. And they were either torn down, moved or they subdivided. That house and this church are about the two oldest remaining houses in Northridge.

DODSON: What was your father's first name so we can put it in our records.

NEGGEN: Christian E.

DODSON: I think the city would probably be interested in that because they are trying to locate things which have been in the valley a long time, possible historic sites.

NEGGEN: I don't know how much longer it will be there. The man that bought it is planning on either remodeling it into offices or to tear it down and put up a store building, you know. Because it's about the only...it is the only undeveloped frontage on Reseda between Gresham and Pullman.

DODSON: There is quite a large lot that it stands on?

NEGGEN: 130 foot frontage now.

DODSON: That would be large.

NEGGEN: We sold it all to him years ago. One of my brothers he bought us out and he lived there until he passed away and then his widow lived there until about a couple of years ago. She sold it.

DODSON: Can you think of any other historic sites that we might be interested in checking on?

NEGGEN: Well, in a sense, ? still standing and still being used ? Van Nuys. It's right across the street from the City Hall. ? At the time this picture was taken. This is where the two fire engines were see and here was the offices. And over on the right hand side was the Police Department. And their City Hall there in Van Nuys was built in oh about 1930 I think they moved into it in 1931. Now that was the first skyscraper in the valley, an eight story building. For a long time the upper floors weren't occupied. Now this picture was taken in 1930 and this was a type of uniform that was adopted. At that time this was inspection and this represented nearly every officer in the valley division at that time. ? showed him that picture.

DODSON: Are you in this picture yourself?



NEGGEN: Yeah, I'm in there.

BOYER: All the valley men, huh? Kind of small compared to now. I can imagine.

NEGGEN: They use wear a khaki uniform in the summer and a blue uniform with a white hat in the winter and a white cap. And they ? a certain type collar. It fits you right around here. And then you had to wear your gun in a holster under your coat and it didn't look very good and almost too convenient so they started to change uniforms and they adopted this type of uniform and it's a dress uniform. I think there is about 65 men at that time.

DODSON: I wonder how many there are signed to the valley at the present time. Do you have any idea.

NEGGEN: About 1,000 I believe.

DODSON: Was this 65 for the whole valley or just...

NEGGEN: The whole valley. 65 in 1930. And some 20 odd years later I was watch commander down at Van Nuys where I'd have 130 men on one watch. Twice as many on one watch as we had in the whole division on three watches.

DODSON: My, the number has certainly increased with the passage of time but then so is the population of the valley.

NEGGEN: Yep. They had what they call a one-man station in Canoga Park and they had one in Pacoima. Where you had one officer on duty. You know they had three different watches and only one man on at a time. And they had a sub-station in North Hollywood but they had two men there on the day watch and two on the night watch and one on the morning watch. At different times I worked all three of the sub-stations. I worked at the one in Canoga Park for about a year and a half. And one man would have everything west of Reseda Blvd. That was the area that you would cover. The whole valley west of Reseda Blvd. And before they got radio cars why you would get a call and you'd go out. If you didn't come back by morning well then they'd go out looking for you.

DODSON: Would the patrol cars also call in by telephone to the station every so often? That was one of the ways you communicated.

NEGGEN: Yeah they'd call in...if they had two cars one might phone in on the hour and the other one on the half

hour you know. If they had three cars working, why then one would call 20 after and the other one 20 of and every 20 minutes they'd phone in...as close as they could.

DODSON: Well, there's certainly been a change on that one, with the coming in of radio.

NEGGEN: Yeah, I think it's gone about '31 or so that they got one radio car that was assigned to the valley. Of course, that was just for receiving stuff, not two-way. You'd get a call and you'd get through with it, then you would have to hunt a phone and call back in. And say, "We're ready. We're back in service now."

DODSON: Do you feel that police work was probably less dangerous then, then it is now? Did you ever you have many cases where a policeman were killed during their service?

NEGGEN: Well, the nearest I've heard people say that things are a lot worse now than they use to be. And then I stopped to think that at 3:00 in the morning I'd get a call, "There's a drunken fight." So I'd go down there by myself before I'd leave the space and I phone in to headquarters and then I'd say I'm leaving for so-and-so. Substance lecture is going on. So



I'd go down there by myself and I've seen the times where they'd be 20 drunk Mexicans in the melee out there. I had no help. If I'd pick up a couple of guys I'd have to haul them to Van Nuys before I could book them. I had no partner to cover me from the backseat. But I'd take them in by myself. Just like you were a Texas Ranger. One disturbance, you'd send on a ranger. That's the truth. Now you have two-way radio and you can call for help.

DODSON: Were the men when you arrested them a little more apt to respect authority. In other words, they wouldn't give you a lot of trouble?

NEGGEN: That is true. And I think the reason was that the courts would back up the police officers more than they do now. The judges wouldn't like to have me...hear me say that either. There's been new laws made at times and judges seemed like they've been leaping up backwards sometimes to protect the criminal without having much consideration for the victim. And as a result, they have less respect for the police officer. And if you got two or three or half a dozen fellows that you're doing battle with, if you accidentally step on a rim step, if your elbow happens to fly up and hit them in the wrong side of the jaw they're not going to say much about it. Now



you slap a guy on a wrist, why then want to prosecute the police officer for brutality. And we have Civil Liberty League or something like that are always ready to go ahead and sue the city or the Mayor or the Chief of Police and the officers involved.

DODSON: Aren't you the brain wonder present league of interpretations if someone breaks into your house and you shoot him?

NEGGEN: You ream yourself wide if you do unless you can prove that he was in there and committing the crime. I had an experience a number of years ago. A drunk trying to break in...so there was a man trying to break into a house. And we went to the address and the fellow opened the door and he was talking through the screen door and the man was laying on the porch. I said, "What happened?" He says, "I'd gone to bed and I heard somebody rap on the front door. I went and I looked out the window and I got see this guy and he had a key. He was trying to get the key into the door and the key wouldn't fit rightly. So he walked on and there was a window opposite the living room. Because he tried to open the screen and the screen was hooked. So I watched him and he walked on the back, down the driveway to the back door and he tried to get in the back door. And this was locked and he

couldn't get into that. So he came back and tried the front door again, tried the screen and the window a second time. Went back, tried the back door again and then there was either a bathroom or a service porch right alongside the back door and there was slight hitch to the lock so it was first repeat fire from the ground on the front. So he got a box to stand on and tried to get the screen off that window. Then he came back to the front door again and tried to get the key in the front...in the lock." So he says, "I got my gun and opened the front door." And I says, "What do you want?" And he says, "Let me in." And he says, "No, what do you want?" He says, "I want in." So he says, "I conked the bullets out of my gun and there he is." So okay, I haul the guy to the hospital and he had a gash about 6 inches long in the scalp and he was so drunk he couldn't hardly talk but he listened ? and took the doctor and poured it on that opened gash and it seemed to revive him a little bit. After a while he was able to give his name and address. And on the way back I noticed that the address was the same number, the same street number as the house that we got the call to. And the street where he said he lived was just one block over. And so I got through with him I'd go by and wouldn't you know it was the subdivision where these houses were all white and the subdivider had built

both streets and the same street number on the next block over, the house looked identical. So he was just too drunk to realize that he was on the wrong street. When he got so many houses up from the corner, "That's my house." He was trying to get into his own house. He was drunk and didn't know he was on the wrong street. Now, in answer to your question, this fellow trying to break in...supposen the screen on your window had been unhooked and the window had not been locked and the guy had taken the screen off and crawled into your house and you say, "Supposen I shot him." When he was just drunk.

DODSON: Of course you wouldn't have known that he was confused at the time and you might have figured that if you didn't something you was get something yourself, you know.

NEGGEN: Though I imagine the average person when the coroner's inquest well he would be exonerated on it for that reason. But according the law, well you're not suppose unless it's in defense of your life or somebody else's life. Or unless the man is committing a felony. So if he comes in there and you catch him burglarizing you or going through your stuff, then he is committing a burglary which is a felony and you have a right to shoot to effect his



arrest or prevent him from harming you or someone else. But I've heard a lot of fellows, "That some so-and-so breaks into my house I'm going to blast him." ? I had it could have happened and somebody had shot that man under those conditions why the guy could have been liable, solely liable. Not for murder perhaps but manslaughter at least and maybe financially liable too. You got be ?

DODSON: Well, can you think of any other interesting personalities or antidotes or stories about the valley that we haven't asked about that you think should be recorded?

NEGGEN: Well, like I told you awhile ago, I'll probably think of something tomorrow. There's an old lady, she's up in her 80s who lived out here in the valley for just as long and possibly longer than I have. I don't know whether she was born here or not. I have idea that she was born over near Calabasas. I don't know where she lives but if you could find her, she could undoubtedly give you a little bit earlier history than I could.

DODSON: Well, we're always glad to know of any people that you might have in mind that could tell us about the valley at some past time.



NEGGEN: Well, some people who've lived over in Calabasas have been there longer than my family had been. Joe Baic is one. The last name is spelled Baic and he lives over in Woodland Hills and I think he was born over there near Calabasas. And his dad is one of the early settlers in there. This woman I was telling you about, her name is Grove, Ida Grove. Her address may be in the telephone directory, I don't know.

DODSON: Is that Grove.

NEGGEN: Yeah. She married one of...she married the son of one of the early ranchers out here. I think she's there. Joe Baic should be able to give you some information.

DODSON: Well, we certainly appreciate all that you've told us tonight Mr. Neggen. That will help us a lot.

NEGGEN: Would you like me to ?

DODSON: No, I don't think so. No, I think that's a little out of my line. Thank you very much Mr. Neggen.

DODSON: You have been listening to an interview with Mr. Menton Neggen. The interview was conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson, Curator of the Los Angeles Valley

College Historical Museum and by Miss Paula Boyer,  
Field Duty to Dr. Dodson. The date is April 1, 1977.